

# Western Washington Hydropower Planning



■ Elwha Dam



■ Culvert project on Little Tahuya Creek

## Background

The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) works to protect fish and wildlife resources as development occurs along our rivers, streams, lakes, marine waters and wetlands. We are authorized to serve in an advisory capacity on water development projects by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act as amended in 1958. This act requires all federal agencies, including FERC, involved in construction, funding, permitting or licensing water development projects to consult with and seek advice from the Fish and Wildlife Service to avoid and mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Hydropower planning work is generated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's hydropower licensing program, and highway construction and maintenance projects approved by or funded by the Federal Highway Administration.

## Who We Are

We are a team of fish and wildlife biologists who have interdisciplinary knowledge about stream, wetland and nearshore ecology, fish and wildlife biology, and the impacts of water development on fish and wildlife and their habitats.

## Who we serve

- Private citizens
- State and local governments
- Other federal agencies
- Tribes

- Hydroelectric power producers
- Public interest groups

## What We Do

We gather information about fish and wildlife and their habitats, we review studies and project designs, we assess potential impacts to resources, and we recommend measures to avoid, minimize and compensate for those impacts. We work closely with developers, utilities, representatives of federal, state and local agencies, Indian tribes, non-governmental groups, and private citizens, from the early conception and planning stages through construction and into operation of the project.

## Hydropower Licensing

Hydropower projects in Washington State have had enormous impacts on fish and wildlife resources. They block fish from spawning and rearing habitat, kill fish passing through turbines, destroy stream habitat by reducing flows or affecting the quality of water in our rivers, and flood important wildlife habitat along streams and river bottoms.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses hydropower projects for periods of 30 to 50 years. At the end of the license terms, project owners must apply for a new license to continue operating the project. At that re-licensing point, the FWS is authorized by the Federal Power Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act to recommend and in

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some instances, require changes to the project or its operation to improve conditions for fish and wildlife.

Participation by the Western Washington Fish & Wildlife Office in re-licensing actions has contributed to agreements that have, or will in the future, greatly improved habitat conditions for wildlife and anadromous and resident fish. On the Skagit, Cowlitz, and Nisqually Rivers, utilities and agencies have agreed to improve flows, provide fish passage, restore habitat conditions, and manage lands for wildlife. Three old, large hydroelectric dams, two on the Elwha River and one on the White Salmon River, will be removed and the rivers restored within the near future.